(b) The steps taken by Government to check and prevent illegal cutting of trees, including that by forest mafia, are given below:

(i) Financial assistance is provided by the Central Government to States/UTs, under various centrally sponsored forestry and wildlife schemes, for the protection and conservation of forest and wildlife.

(ii) A network of protected areas i.e. Wildlife National Parks and Sanctuaries has been created.

(iii) Local communities have been involved in protection, conservation and management of forests through the process of Joint Forest Management.

(iv) Harvesting of trees from Government Forest Land is done only through the agency of State Forest Departments/Forest Development Corporations.

(v) Many State Governments have made amendments in their State Forest Acts and/or State amendments in the Indian Forest Act, 1927 to make the provisions of penalties against illicit felling more stringent like increase in amount of fine, increase in period of imprisonment and confiscation of tools, implements, vehicles etc., used in the commission of offence etc.

It is also mentioed that protection and conservation of forests is primarily the responsibility of concerned State/UT Governments.

Hydro-electric power project in Kerala

1086. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal for the sanction of Hydro-electric power project at 'Pathrakadavu' in Kerala is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, whether Government have examined the environmental implications of the project;

(c) whether it is a fact that rare species of fishes are likely to face the threat of extinction if the project is implemented;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the proposed project will destroy the Silent Valley National Park; and

(e) whether Government consider to conduct a detailed study into the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) Does not arise.

Encroachment of forest land in Maharashtra

1087. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:
SHRI SANJAY RAJARAM RAUT:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether forest land in Maharashtra has been encroached on a large scale;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise; and

(c) the action being taken by Government to remove the encroachments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) According to the information received from the State Government of Maharashtra, as on 11-09-2003, about 79,641 hectares of forest land is under encroachment in the State. District-wise details of encroachment are maintained by the respective State/UT Governments.

(c) The responsibility of eviction of encroachments from forest land lies with the State/UT Government. However, the Central Government, while issuing policy guidelines on regularisation of encroachments on 18-09-1990, asked all the State/UT Governments to take immediate action to evict all ineligible encroachments from forest land. The Central Government, vide letters dated 03-05-2002, 30-10-2002 and 03-02-2004, again reiterated these guidelines and asked the State/UT Governments to carry out the eviction operation in a time bound manner. As a follow-up of the directions of the Central Government, the State Government have cleared an area of about 13,557 hectares of forest land from the encroachers.